

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 171026Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8894
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 2340

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT BG
SUBJECT: SOME POLITICIANS JOIN JAGODAL; ATAUR RAHMAN KHAN
ISSUES PESSIMISTIC STATEMENT

REFS: A. DACCA 0673 (NOTAL); B. DACCA 1963

1. IN THE LAST FEW DAYS, POLITICIANS FROM SEVERAL
DIFFERENT PARTIES HAVE JOINED JAGODAL. THE MOST
IMPORTANT INDIVIDUALS INCLUDE MANY OF KHANDAKAR
MUSHTAQUE AHMED'S SUPPORTERS, LED BY K.M. OBAIDUR
RAHMAN AND FORMER PRESIDENT MOHAMMADULLAH. THE LATTER
INDIVIDUALS HAVE INTERMITTENTLY NEGOTIATED WITH PRESI-
DENT ZIA FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, FIRST WITH THE HOPE OF
SECURING THE RELEASE OF MUSHTAQUE (REF A), AND AFTER
THAT ENDEAVOR FAILED, AS INDIVIDUALS WHOSE RETURN TO
POLITICS COULD MOST EASILY BE FACILITATED BY JOINING
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JAGODAL. AS OBAIDUR RAHMAN TOLD POLOFF RECENTLY, THE TIME
HAD COME FOR THE ERSTWHILE DEMOCRATIC LEAGUERS TO
LOOK TO THEIR OWN FUTURES AND FORGET, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY,
ABOUT MUSHTAQUE, WHO APPEARED TO THEM TO BE LOCKED AWAY
SECURELY AT ZIA'S INSISTANCE. (NOT ALL OF MUSHTAQUE'S
CLOSE SUIPORTERS HAVE JOINED JAGODAL, HOWEVER; IN A PRESS
NOTICE APRIL 17, OBAID'S NAME APPEARED WITH SEVERAL OTHERS,

BUT SUCH PROMIENENT MUSHTAQUE SUPPORTERS AS NURAL ISLAM "MANJU" AND SHAH MOAZZAM HOSSAIN, REPORTEDLY RELEASED FROM JAIL A FEW DAYS BACK, WERE NOT ON THE LIST.)

2. JAGODAL HAS ALSO ATTRACTED FUNCTIONARIES FROM THE MUSLIM LEAGUE, THE ISLAMIC DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE BANGLADESH JATIYO LEAGUE (BJL) OF ATAUR RAHMAN KHAN. A PRESS NOTICE APRIL 11 LISTED FOURTEEN MEMBERS OF BJL, MOST IDENTIFIED AS PARTY ORGANIZERS AND CENTRAL WORKING COMMITTEE MEMBERS. WHY (OR IF) THEY DESERTED ATA WAS UNCLEAR LAST WEEK, BUT A PRESS STATEMENT BY ATA OVER THE WEEKEND SUGGESTS THAT THEY MAY HAVE BECOME IMPATIENT WITH THE OLD MAN.

3. ATA ISSUED A PRESS STATEMENT APRIL 15 WHICH CALLED A FAILURE HIS RECENT MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT ZIA OVER THE COMPOSITION OF A POLITICAL FRONT AND AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT PRECEEDING ELECTIONS (REF B). IN THE SHORT AND RATHER ELOQUENT STATEMENT, ATA SAID THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES WERE COMMITTED TO A PARLIAMENTARY FORM OF GOVERNMENT, BUT THEY HAD BECOME CONVINCED THAT ZIA'S GOVERNMENT DID NOT INTEND TO RELINQUISH THE PRESIDENTIAL FORM AND ZIA'S REPORTED AGREEMENT TO ABOLISH THE FOURTH AMENDMENT, AUTHORIZING PRESIDENTIAL RULE, WAS A MYTH. CONCERNING HIS OWN ROLE, ATA SAID "I SHOULD ALSO LIKE TO STATE ... THAT IT WOULD BE RIDICULOUS TO SUPPOSE THAT I

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HAVE SPENT ALL THESE YEARS IN POLITICS MERELY TO BECOME A PROTOCOL PRIME MINISTER IN AN INTERIM MULTI-PARTY GOVERNMENT SET UP FOR THE PURPOSE OF HOLDING ELECTIONS UNDER A PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM." ATA CONCLUDED THAT EFFORTS TO REACH A CONSTITUTIONAL STATEMENT HAD BEEN ONLY A DEVICE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO BUY TIME WHILE IT LAID PLANS TO EXTEND ITS OWN RULE.

4. ATA'S STATEMENT, PRINTED ONLY IN THE NEW SUNDAY WEEKLY, NEW NATION, PUBLISHED BY MOINUL HOSSAIN, CHAIRMAN OF ITTEFAQ PUBLICATIONS, MAY NOT HAVE REPRESENTED ATA'S FINAL REJECTION OF ZIA'S BLANDISHMENTS TO JOIN THE FRONT. THE POLITICIANS' RECENT CONVOLUTED NEGOTIATIONS WITH ZIA MAKE ANY CONCLUSION TENTATIVE, BUT THE DESERTIONS FROM ATA'S PARTY SUGGEST THAT LESSER RANKING OPPORTUNITISTS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT ATA WAS TOO STUBBORN, OR TOO PROUD, FOR THEIR LIKING.

5. WHETHER ZIA'S BANDWAGON CAN GAIN MOMENTUM WITH JUST THE SMALL FRY REMAINS DUBIOUS, BUT AT LEAST HE IS NO LONGER HIGH AND DRY WITH ONLY A ADVISORS FOR COMPANY. NEVERTHELESS, ZIA STILL NEEDS SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT AND NO

DOUBT OTHER POLITICIANS, NOTABLY MASHIUR RAHMAN OF
NAP/B, WILL CONTINUE THEIR NIGHTLY JOURNEYS TO THE
CANTONMENT IN SEARCH OF THE ELUSIVE POLITICAL COALITION.
SCHNEIDER

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